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Security Council

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Letter dated 6 March 2001 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), I have the honour to convey the attached report on the international security presence in Kosovo covering the period from 11 December 2000 to 31 January 2001 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring the report to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**

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Annex

Monthly report to the United Nations on the operations of the Kosovo Force

1. Over the reporting period (11 December 2000-31 January 2001)[a] there were approximately 43,500 troops of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) in theatre, with no major changes in deployment since the last report.

2. On 14 January 2001, Mr. Hans Haekkerup replaced Dr. Bernard Kouchner as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

3. Serbian Parliamentary elections were held in the province on 23 December 2000. The situation throughout Kosovo remained calm during voting. The presence of KFOR and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) police preserved a safe and secure environment for freedom of movement.

Security

4. Overall, the situation in Kosovo remained stable but tense, with continued acts of ethnic violence and harassment throughout the province. Mitrovica remains a key area of tension. Demonstrations took place between 16 and 19 December in Leposavic following the arrest of a Kosovar Serb who had attempted to drive over an officer of the Kosovo Police Service (KPS). Kosovar Serbs took control of two KFOR vehicles, stole two rifles and detained seven KFOR soldiers for a few hours. In the ensuing escalation, one Kosovar Serb was shot dead and three KFOR vehicles and one civilian vehicle were set alight. KFOR evacuated UNMIK policemen and KPS members for one night, and reinforced surveillance close to police stations in the Kosovar Serb areas.

5. In another serious incident, rioting occurred in Mitrovica on 29 January after a grenade attack by Kosovar Serbs, which led to the death of a young Kosovar Albanian. During the disturbances an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) car was burned and a Kosovar Serb interpreter was beaten by the crowd. Thirty-two KFOR troops were injured and three vehicles destroyed during three days of civil unrest before the situation was brought under control by KFOR.

6. There were only 9 minor acts of violence against KFOR during the reporting period. These included the kidnapping of a KFOR soldier (Multinational Brigade (MNB) (South)), who was almost immediately released, slightly injured, but without his weapon. In other incidents, shots were fired at KFOR patrols on their way to investigate a suspected arson site in the Kosovar Serb enclave of Banja: and a grenade, which did not explode, was thrown at a KFOR checkpoint.

7. Inter-ethnic intimidation continued, including an attack on 29 December in Obilic on an elderly Serb couple, following which the man died of his injuries; a Kosovar Albanian suspect was subsequently arrested by UNMIK police. On 10 January 2001, in Urosevac, a bomb exploded in a building owned by a Kosovar Albanian resulting in material damage and injuries to three civilians. On 11 January, in Drajkovic, KFOR intervened to stop a group of Kosovar Serbs stoning some Kosovar Albanians. On 27 January, an assault on two Kosovar Albanians by some Kosovar Serbs in Mitrovica was stopped by KFOR, and, in separate incidents in Kosovo Polje, two Kosovar Serbs were stabbed to death.

8. Although violence committed against Kosovar Albanian politicians diminished during the reporting period, a possible politically motivated murder took place on 15 December in Orlat when a member of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), Fetah Rudi, was shot from a passing car and later died from his injuries. On 24 December, in Prizren, a home-made bomb exploded in front of a shop owned by a Roma, a member of LDK, causing material damage only.

9. Throughout the period, KFOR troops continued almost on a daily basis to uncover and confiscate weapons, ammunition and explosives during search operations. Up to 40 Kosovar Albanians were detained or handed over to UNMIK police as a result. On 10 January, KFOR discovered three bunkers containing 100 rounds of 7.62 mm ammunition and detained two suspected members of the Ethnic Albanian Armed Groups (EAAG) in Dabedic Mahala.

10. Confiscated weapons continue to be destroyed as part of the commercial destruction programme. Between 1 December 2000 and 31 January 2001, KFOR destroyed 174 weapons, including rifles, pistols, anti-tank and air defence weapons. To date 5,296 weapons have been destroyed.

Illegal border activity

11. KFOR troops continued to provide appropriate control of Kosovo's internal boundaries and external borders and recognized crossing points. All but two of the recognized crossing points within each MNB into the Ground Safety Zone (GSZ) remain closed.

12. Throughout the period, there were skirmishes involving small arms, automatic weapons fire and mortar fire between EAAG and Serb security forces in the Presevo Valley. KFOR continued to make use of the Joint Implementation Commission (JIC), set up under the military technical agreement, to encourage the two sides to avoid violence, and facilitated a meeting on 28 December between representatives of the Serbian government and EAAG to reduce tension in the Ground Safety Zone (GSZ). Six Serb hostages were released by EAAG to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on 1 January. KFOR continued to interdict suspected EAAG members crossing from or into the GSZ.

13. The most serious incidents, which took place over a three-day period from 26 to 28 January, involved mortar strikes into the GSZ from Serbia. On 27 January, KFOR arranged a ceasefire following a request from the Serbian authorities. The attacks resulted in the displacement of over 40 persons, including 7 children, to Kosovo, with the majority eventually being housed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Gnjilane. Throughout January EAAG elements continued to conduct low level training in the GSZ with reports of small arms fire.

14. KFOR continued to take action to prevent the flow of supplies from inside Kosovo, increased its monitoring of the boundary and refused to allow ethnic Albanian males of military age to cross into the Presevo Valley.

Security Council resolution 1160 (1998)

15. Although KFOR operations continue to result in weapons seizures, there have been no reported violations of Security Council resolution 1160 (1998).

Cooperation and compliance by the parties

16. Over the reporting period, there were eight reported cases of non-compliance by the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC), relating mainly to the possession of illegal weapons and ammunition, the misuse of authorized weapons, robbery and assault. Two persons were dismissed for tax offences and absenteeism.

17. The KPC's engagement in humanitarian work projects continued with up to 37,760 person workdays devoted so far to activities such as house repair, road construction, school refurbishment and maintenance, and the development, repair and cleaning of public areas.

18. The army (VJ) and security forces of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia remain generally compliant with the terms of the military technical agreement and continue to be cooperative in their dealings with KFOR.

Cooperation with international organizations

19. KFOR continues to provide regular assistance on request to international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) throughout Kosovo on a daily basis, and to provide framework security in support of UNMIK police operations targeting organized crime, prostitution and smuggling. In addition, KFOR troops continue to support safe conditions for minority returns.

Return of refugees and displaced persons

20. The number of refugees and displaced persons returning to Kosovo has decreased significantly with the onset of winter and following the appeal made by the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations that returns be postponed until spring 2001. In the first two weeks of December, only 1,031 organized returns to Kosovo were registered. Approximately 200,000 Kosovar Serbs and 30-40,000 other ethnic minorities remain displaced within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In general, UNHCR is focusing on the return of people in the spring, and KFOR is preparing for the repatriation.

Outlook

21. The security situation in the province is expected to remain relatively stable but tense in Mitrovica and along the boundary with southern Serbia in the Presevo Valley.

Notes

[a] Future reports will cover a calendar month.